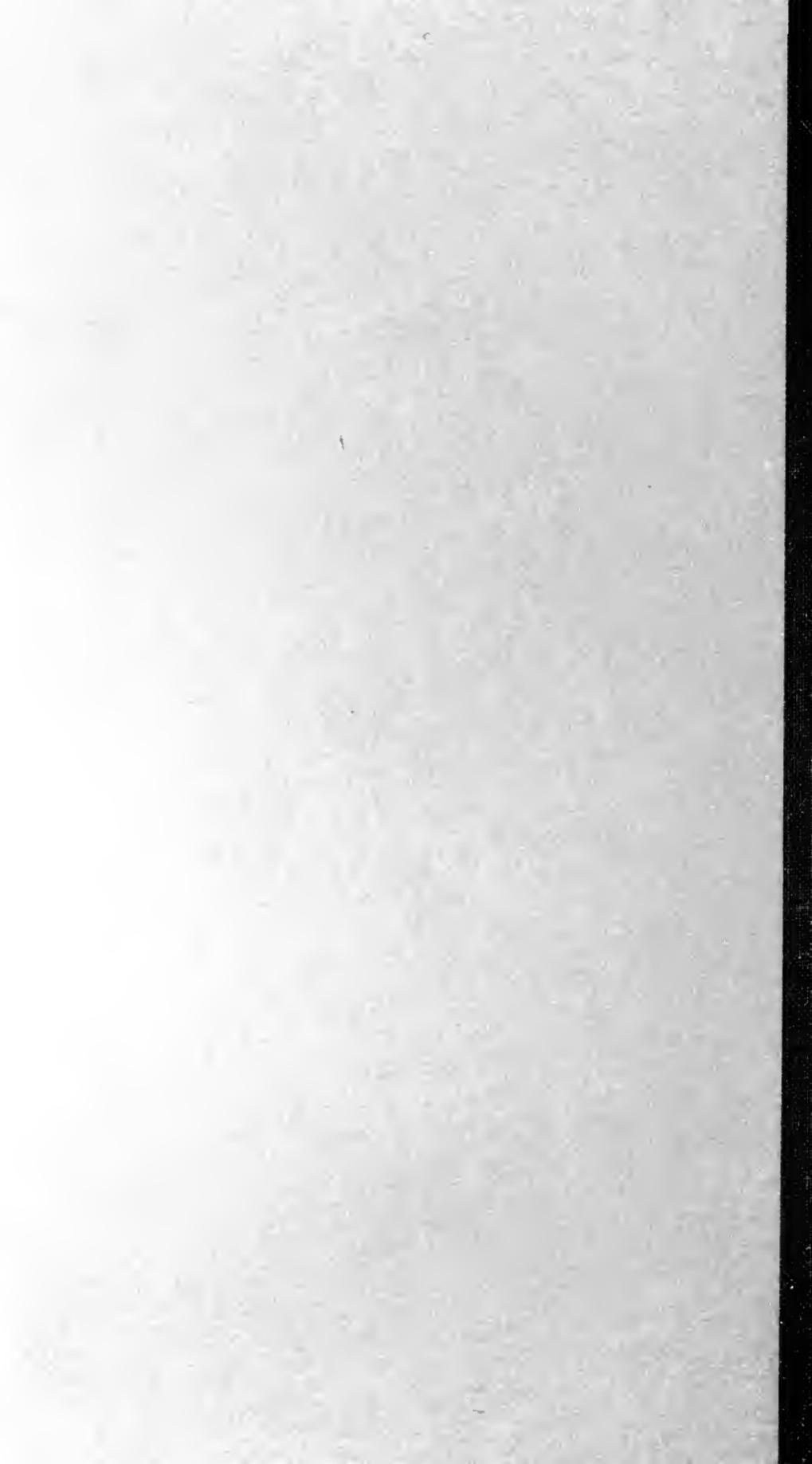


Minto, William Hugh Elliot-Murray-Kynynmound, 3d earl of, 1814-1891

Remarks on the government scheme of national education

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REMARKS
ON
THE GOVERNMENT SCHEME
OF
NATIONAL EDUCATION.



REMARKS
ON
THE GOVERNMENT SCHEME
OF
NATIONAL EDUCATION,
AS APPLIED TO
SCOTLAND.

BY

LORD MELGUND, M.P.

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R E M A R K S.

THE preliminary question as to whether there shall or shall not be some general system of National Education having been at length virtually decided in the affirmative, some of the obstacles which once rendered it difficult to enter upon a fair consideration of what that system ought to be are now overcome.

These obstacles, indeed, were never very formidable in Scotland, where it is probable that, from practical experience of the advantages of their parish schools, the people have sufficient acuteness to perceive that an educational establishment is advantageous to their interests, and that the welfare and independence of their children would be much better consulted by reforming and extending an institution to which they look with affection, than by following the English fashion of trusting the maintenance of schools to the voluntary, or, in other words, to the charitable efforts of individuals and of societies. Under these circumstances, the Scottish portion of the question may now be considered at some advan-

tage. In the proceedings of Government with regard to Scotland, it was open to them to take one of two very different courses,—either to appeal silently to the clergy to carry out a scheme in harmony with their own views and interests ; or to appeal openly to the country in favour of one of a totally opposite character,—one which, in avoiding all connexion with separate political and sectarian bodies, should seek to deal with Scotland as a whole, and to instruct her people not only in the use of books and slates, but in those higher social requirements of frugality, temperance, providence, and mutual forbearance, without which book learning is of little avail in guarding a nation against the perils of a low standard of morality.

By the first course, a discordant patchwork of sectarian superintendence would have been the basis of operations. By the second, the groundwork of the plan would have been laid upon the broadest principles of Christian charity. A middle course, however, has been hit upon, more nearly resembling the former than the latter scheme, through the medium of which the country is unwittingly engaged in placing the National Education under the control of those two great antagonistic societies at present embarked in an unseemly struggle for supremacy.

The Government grants are nearly monopolized by those two sects : the Free Church touching about two-thirds, and the Established Church about

one-third; of the amount appropriated to Scotland.* Yet the country has given not the slightest indication of an opinion that either of these bodies is a fit recipient of so important a national trust.

Let us remember what are the pretensions and the claims of each, for they are identical in almost every respect. Springing from the same source, each, under sanction of Acts of Assembly and of Acts of Parliament, virtually proclaims itself infallible. Each, according to its own showing, is, or ought to be, as supreme as ever was the Pope of Rome.

Each being the sole representative of Christ upon earth, their laws are equally possessed of greater weight than attaches to mere human enactments. It is scarcely necessary to add, that, while the excellent individuals composing both these bodies are, no doubt, animated by a sincere desire to promote the welfare of their fellow-countrymen,

* It is difficult to obtain information as to the details of expenditure, but, as far as can be gathered from a return presented to Parliament last session, the sum of £1913 was granted to the Establishment ; £3620 to the Free Church ; £136 to the Episcopalians ; £462 to schools classed "undetermined," during the year 1847.

During the three first months of the present year, the Establishment schools have received - - - £549 0 0
The Free Church schools, - - - £1774 0 0
No grants had been appropriated to any other schools during that period.

their opinions are biassed by that *esprit de corps* which leads men, whether lay or clerical, to view the interests of the community through the distorting medium of those of their own class.

But, although the two rival churches are identical in these particulars, in their relation to the public at large, they stand in widely different positions. On the one hand, the Free Church,* having shaken herself clear from all national control, her sectarianism is much more secure than that of her rival ; hers being a strictly exclusive society, the people at large are necessarily cut off from the exercise of any voice in her counsels. No man, not a member of the society, has a right to interfere in her affairs, however mistaken he may believe her policy to be, any more than he has a right to interfere in those of a railway company to which he does not belong ; and the exclusiveness of the Free Church is in fact much more rigid than that of the company, because, although she freely asks, and indiscriminately receives, contributions, both in money and in kind, from every quarter, her rules disfranchise a large class of con-

* Far too little attention is paid to the character of the Free Church government. It is conducted with great skill from a spiritual centre, is popular in appearance, but hierarchical in its tendencies. A succession of able men at the head of such an organization might render it, even in the present age, dangerous to civil liberty.

tributors, who, in the latter case, would be entitled to a fair share in the direction.

The Established Church, on the contrary, being an institution of a public nature, every man has a right, as a citizen, to advocate such changes in its constitution as he thinks it useful to promote. As a disposition exists in some quarters to assume to the Free Church the character of a national institution, it is not out of place to call attention to this radical difference between the two societies in their relation to the public at large; and to suggest that, if possible, still greater caution should be used in placing the national funds within reach of this irresponsible body than in the hands of the Establishment itself.

Without referring to the flagrant practical injustice done by the Privy Council measures to the numerically less important dissenting bodies who derive no benefit from them, they may be shown to be in every way most partial, unequal, and inefficient for their purpose. Whether considered in their bearing upon England and Scotland separately—upon different parts of Scotland—upon the interests of the different sects in Scotland—their inapplicability to the condition of the country is most remarkable.

And it is not surprising that this should be the case, since it may be confidently asserted that the principles of the Privy Council measures were laid down solely with reference to the exigencies of

England, where no national system had ever existed.*

Under this supposition only it becomes possible to explain why the same treatment is applied to the two countries,—to the one which, dreading every approach to a really national system, has been content to entrust the education of her people to chance and to eleemosynary contributions,—as to the other, which has flourished under such system, more or less perfect, for generations.

It is said that universal applicability is the true test of a sound principle ; and if this be so, then, indeed, must the new measures be everywhere condemned,—for, in their application to the two countries, the *reductio ad absurdum* appears most complete when it is pointed out that, *because* Scotland has been so provident as to compel her parishes and her lairds to maintain schools, *therefore* the funds, thus providently secured, shall not entitle her to participate in the general grants which are at the

* In certain resolutions adopted at a general meeting of parochial schoolmasters in September 1847, the Government, through Mr Kay Shuttleworth, were warned that their scheme was unsuited to the improvement of the parochial schools, and that it was injurious in many ways.

After expressing their sorrow that, in making no provision for old and infirm teachers, the greatest defect of the system is left without a remedy, and that the whole scheme is one which precludes the parish schools from its benefits, the schoolmasters say, “ it is known that the scheme was originally framed with no intention to embrace the parish schools.”

disposal of English parishes and of English squires, whose estates are burdened by no such charge.

Thus is the public money handed out to the English and the Scotch in an inverse ratio to the wisdom of their ancestors ; for precisely to the extent to which the Scotch local taxation is adequate to the wants of the people, to that extent is Scotland disqualified to receive assistance from general taxation.

Again,—Scotland, in her parish schools, has bound herself to educate her paupers gratis. England, on the other hand, is not locally taxed for the education of the poor, nor does she even oblige the schools in receipt of Privy Council grants to educate pauper children at all. On the contrary, an additional sum of L.35,000, altogether independent of the general education grant, has been voted by Parliament to provide education for pauper children during the present year ; being rather more than has been appropriated to Scotland for every purpose by the Committee of Council since the year 1839.*

* According to the return presented last session “ of all sums which have been granted under authority of the Committee of Privy Council for Educational purposes in Scotland,” &c. &c., it appears that, during the last nine years, and the three first months of this year, L.34,975 have been applied to Scotland. The money has been expended very unevenly, but chiefly in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Thus the counties of Lanark and Edinburgh appear in the list as having received L.8267 and L.8768 respectively, whilst not one of the counties of Ross, Roxburgh, Kirkcudbright, and Berwick has received as much as L.150. The counties of Haddington and Sutherland have received nothing at all.

This comparison has been instituted, not for the purpose of suggesting that too much of the public money has been devoted to English educational purposes, but with the hope of demonstrating the fallacy of applying the principle of the minutes of Council to one part, at least, of the united kingdom ; and it may be remarked that, whilst Scotland is taxed perhaps L.40,000* a-year, not only does the Legislature decline to make any addition to this sum from the public revenues, but that, in refusing to take steps to reform the abuses of the system, it actually prevents the money from being laid out to the greatest advantage.

That reforms are necessary no one can deny ; among the minor ones may be instanced the urgent necessity of affording facilities for the removal of improper persons from their charges.

At the present moment, even if a teacher be culpably negligent of, and morally unfit for, his duties, it is extremely difficult for the parish to get rid of him, while, from ignorance and incapacity, they have actually no redress. Mr John Gibson, Government Inspector, quotes a case where a schoolmaster had been in charge of a school for twenty-

* Memorial of Parish Schoolmasters to Lord J. Russell.

It is stated in the same memorial, that a " similar educational establishment in England, supported by English property, would amount to upwards of L.400,000 per annum." They estimate the sum paid as salary at L.30,000, which would entitle Scotland to an annual grant of L.15,000, in virtue of the parochial schools alone.

six years, and had never had more than eight scholars at a time. The Presbytery having endeavoured to depose him, were found to have gone beyond their statutory power, and he was reponed by the civil court. His school, he says, became almost deserted.*

Even mental aberration affords no grounds for deposition, and there are instances of lunatics having been in possession of the house and stipend.

A case has been related to me, in which the schoolmaster was in the habit of walking about with a hatchet on his shoulder, with which he threatened to cut off the heads of any children that approached him.†

But besides the cases of this kind, there is a large class of persons who, having been worn out in the service, no longer possess the requisite amount of vigour and zeal, but are nevertheless compelled by their necessities to continue in the nominal performance of their duties.

It is supposed that as many as two hundred teachers have been more than thirty years in the profession, and many of them of course a much longer period. To provide against these cases, it was most

* Evidence before the Lords' Committee, p. 22.

† "Supposing a man unhappily becomes a lunatic, does he still continue a schoolmaster?" "He continues a parochial schoolmaster."—"There is no means of dismissing him?" "I do not think there is any means of dismissing him."—Mr Gibson's evidence, p. 29.

essential that a retiring allowance should be established,—as might have been done at an expense very trifling in comparison with the benefits to be derived from it.*

But the two points to which it is more especially necessary to direct attention are,—the inadequate remuneration of the schoolmasters, and the sectarian constitution of the school system itself.

And, first, with regard to salaries. The parochial system of Scotland has never been capable of that elasticity, or expansive power, which would have rendered its utility progressive, and adequate to overtake the requirements of an increasing population.

In fact, the present educational deficiencies of Scotland arise almost entirely from the population having outgrown an institution which, considered with reference to the little interest felt in such subjects in bye-gone times,—the former poverty of the country, and the thinness of its population,—was once remarkably liberal.

Once only since the year 1696 has any addition, and that a very insignificant one, been made to the salaries of schoolmasters, although the population within that time has nearly trebled, whilst the wealth of the country has increased in a much greater ratio.

* It is impossible to believe that Government, in devising educational measures for Scotland, *unintentionally* overlooked these and other defects in the parish schools, pointed out by their own Inspectors. Considerations of policy alone must have deterred them from proposing the necessary remedies.

By the Act of 1803, their salaries were fixed at their present rates, by which each, independently of his house and statutory allowance of garden ground, receives from L.25 to L.34 per annum.

To eke out a further sum, they are generally permitted to hold certain small parochial offices, which, on an average, give to each about L.14 more.*

In making provision for the support of the parish ministers, there existed, and still exists, means to increase their stipends, upon adjudication by the civil power, out of the unappropriated teinds of the respective parishes.

But nothing of the kind was provided in the case of the schoolmasters ;† and the consequence is that villages, towns, and mines, with vast accumulations

* By a Parliamentary abstract of returns presented last session, the value of the adjunct offices are classified thus :—

Annual emoluments under L.10 enjoyed by 307 teachers.

L.10 and under L.20	...	238	...
20	...	30	...
30	...	40	...
40	...	50	...
50	...	60	...
60 and upwards,	...	10	...

763

Number of schoolmasters who hold no other office, 107 ; ditto who have made no return, 2 ; number of parishes vacant, 11 ; total, 883 teachers.

† It may nevertheless be argued that the teinds are applicable to the support of schools. Charles the First's decrees-arbitral state that they are to be applied to the " better providing of kirks and ministers' stipends, and other pious uses."

of population and of wealth, have sprung up with no other public provision for education than was possessed by the locality in its more unimproved and primitive condition.

The charge upon the heritors being a fixed charge, varying* only with the price of corn, it takes no account of the increase of wealth and population of a district. Thus it appears that wealth and misery have gone hand-in-hand ; whilst the more thinly peopled districts (those in the Lowlands at least) can say, that very few of their children are permitted to be brought up in that dangerous state of ignorance and immorality to be found in naturally more favoured localities.

The foresight of our ancestors certainly failed them in this particular ; for if it be right to have an educational establishment at all, it is surely equally right that it should be endued with such powers of adaptation to varying circumstances, as will not only preserve its usefulness unimpaired, but will render it progressive. It is clear, that a parish which may have been well off an hundred years ago with one school, may now require two or more ; and that a stipend of L.30 a-year, which

* Not varying, however, from year to year. By the Act of 1803, the maximum salary was fixed at two chalders, and the minimum at a chalder and a-half of oatmeal,—the value to be estimated every twenty-five years, according to the average fairs of the twenty-five preceding years. The value of the chalder was fixed in 1828 at L.17, 2s. 2d. The value will again be struck in 1853.

was perhaps liberal in one century, may be little better than starvation in the next.

On this point, says the Rev. Norman Macleod before the House of Lords' Committee of 1845, "If we look at what was considered in the early history of our Church and country as a sufficient salary for parochial schoolmasters, and compare it with the salary that clergymen and other people at that time had, we shall see that they have been left far behind in the poor salaries that those persons have now. I will mention an illustration of what I mean. In our First Book of Discipline, which afterwards obtained the sanction of our Legislature in 1560, it was proposed that the minimum sum of the parochial schoolmaster should be 100 marks Scots, and the maximum 200 marks ; and the very same book declares, that they considered 300 marks as a sufficient stipend for the principal of an university, making him only a third more than the maximum of the parish schoolmaster ; and subsequent to that period, the minister of the West Kirk in Edinburgh had but 150 marks, and was a Lord of Session at the same time. The minister of Dumfries had 50 marks ; so that, looking to what was supposed to be given to clergymen and others, it appears to me that parochial schoolmasters have been more overlooked than any other class : they have been left far behind."

The fact is, that the Church, whilst consistently advocating the intimacy of her connexion with the school establishment, in regard to the authority to

be exercised over it, has less jealously asserted the rights of the schoolmasters to share with her the increased emoluments that may have been from time to time awarded to the ministers out of the local teinds. If the schools are to be considered part and parcel of the Church, it is reasonable that they be maintained out of the Church funds. But it is unreasonable in the Church to claim this intimate connexion, and at the same time to make no allowance out of the teinds of a parish to the schoolmaster, while they are perhaps exhausted in the payment of an increasing provision to the minister.

Properly to understand the next point, namely, the constitutional sectarianism of the parochial schools, it is necessary to refer to the origin of the institution itself, with the intention of acknowledging and even of displaying the difficulties with which the question of its reform is surrounded, and which consist mainly in the prescriptive and legislative intimacy of its connexion with the Church.

Both in regard to infallibility and to the right of administering the public wealth, the early Scotch reformers desired from the first to place themselves in the position lately occupied by the Pope and the Roman hierarchy, to whom they had succeeded. They claimed, on the merit of the soundness of their doctrine, the whole patrimony of the Church, amounting, it is supposed, to a third of the valuable property of Scotland, and the tithes of the remainder. They claimed all “tithes of hay, hemp, lint, cheese,

fish, calf, lambs, wool, and all sorts of corn," . . . " all things doted in times past, with all annual rent, both to burgh and land pertaining to priests, chantries, colleges, chaplainries, and friars of all orders, to the Sisters of the Seynes, and all others of that sort." . . . " The whole revenues of the temporalities of bishops, deans, and archdeacons, with all rents of lands pertaining to cathedral churches, which must be applied to the entertainment of superintendents and universities." They resolved soon afterwards, in the year 1578, that their authority proceeded from "God the Father, through his only mediator Christ," that their " power and policy should be taken from the pure foundation of Scripture, the kirke hearing the voice of Christ the only Spiritual King, and being ruled by his laws;" that " the ministers exercise not civil jurisdiction, but teach the magistrate how it should be exercised, according to the Word ;" and subsequently, in the Westminster Confession of Faith, it is enacted, that "the Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hands of church-officers distinct from the civil magistrate. To these officers the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut the Kingdom of Heaven against the impenitent, both by the word and censures, and to open it unto penitent sinners by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occa-

sion shall require," &c. And thus it is too apparent that Scotland offers no contradiction to the remark of the statesman and historian who observes, that "every reformer has erected, and every follower has laboured to support, a little Papacy in their own community."

But whilst the ambition of the Scotch Church was unbounded by any restraints, save those imposed upon them by their lay rivals for power, they certainly hallowed their designs by proposing a scheme of intended national utility, and for one portion of which they have not obtained sufficient credit from posterity.

Under the administration of the reformed church, the revenues of the Roman Catholic Church were to be applied to three purposes. First, to the support of the ministers and superintendents, which latter (in spite of what modern Presbyterianism feels bound to maintain to the contrary) were a species of ambulatory bishops.

Secondly, to the support of schoolmasters and professors, and to the endowment of schools and universities.

Thirdly, to the support of the pauperism of the day.

These three departments of the national interests it was proposed should be placed under the control of the Church, to whom the whole patrimony of St Peter was to be handed over—a design which was,

however, defeated by the nobles, who, having already possession of a portion of the prey, “affected to consider the proposal for an impartial distribution of this fund to promote religion, to encourage learning, and to support the poor, as a project altogether visionary, bestowing upon it the name of a ‘devout imagination,’ and treating it with the utmost scorn.”

But though they failed to secure to themselves the unlimited control over these vast possessions, they fortunately succeeded in sowing the seeds from which sprang the present educational institutions of this country.

Over these they were allowed (as being probably the body best fitted at that time by their pursuits to discharge such functions) to exercise an authority which has since been sanctioned by repeated Acts of Parliament.

Their early intentions were in many respects liberal and provident, and were laid down with much precision in the First Book of Discipline. It is there settled, “that every several kirke have one Schoolmaster,” that “the fruit and commodity thereof shall suddenly appear: for, first, the youthead and tender children shall be nourished and brought up in virtue in presence of their friends, by whose good attendance many inconveniencies may be avoided which the youth commonly fall into; secondly, the exercise of children

in every kirke* shall be great instruction to the aged; for this must be carefully provided for, that no father, of what estate or condition that ever he be, use his children at his own fantasy; but all must be compelled to bring up their children in learning and in virtue." Chap. vii.

Had the Church confined itself to the disinterested enforcement of such regulations as these for the purpose of rearing the "youthead" in "learning and in virtue," the country would have had no cause, at the present time, for jealousy of her proceedings. But unfortunately, under other regulations, confirmed by a series of Acts of Parliament, care has been taken to impose certain disabilities upon those whose conscientious scruples forbid them to subscribe to her tenets, and to conform to her discipline.

Thus under an Act of William and Mary it is provided that "no Professors, Principals, Regents, Masters, or others be allowed to exercise their functions but such as acknowledge, and profess, and subscribe to the Confession of Faith ratified and approven by this present Parliament," &c.

Another Act of the same reign declares that "all Schoolmasters and Teachers of youth in Schools are and shall be liable to the trial, judgment, and censure of the presbyteries of the bounds," &c. By the

* The word "kirke" appears to be used occasionally in the sense of the word "congregation."

Act of Union similar acknowledgements of conformity and submission to Church Government are required, and by the Act of 43 Geo. III. it is enacted, that the "superintendence of schools shall continue with the ministers and elders as heretofore," &c.; that the presbyteries may make certain regulations which the schoolmaster must obey, and that in cases of misconduct, a libel having been served upon him, their judgment is final.

A candidate, prior to admission to the charge of a school, is now required to sign the oath of allegiance and the Confession of Faith,* and it is by laws and customs such as these that the non-conformists of Scotland, who are sometimes reckoned at two-thirds of the population, are disabled from holding situations in their own schools.

Such being the origin of the connexion between the Church and the Parish Schools, it is not surprising that the Established clergy should be loth to surrender their exclusive privileges, although every plea for retaining them has ceased.

Exclusive, however, as the constitution of the school system undoubtedly is, the bad principle

* Burton's Manual of the Law of Scotland.

The author of "a Letter to the Right Honourable Andrew Rutherford, M. P." quotes a formula to which, apparently, it is necessary that the schoolmaster should attach his signature.

It is very stringent, and serves effectually to catch those who might not object to subscribe to the Confession of Faith itself.

It will be found copied into the Appendix.

inherent in it has nevertheless failed altogether to overcome the good sense of the teachers and even of the presbyteries. They appear to have dealt liberally by all classes of Dissenters in religious matters, and they certainly cannot be reproached with having given offence by dogmatical teaching, or by attempts to proselytize. In this respect it is probable that the schoolmasters deserve greater credit than the ministers, whose right of inspection does not imply the power of prescribing any particular course of instruction in the schools.

For instance, under Acts of Assembly* it is required, that the schools be opened with Psalms and prayers, a custom which is, we believe, rarely observed ; and a similar exercise of discretionary power on the part of the teachers has probably in many instances neutralized much of the evil which an uncompromising spirit of dogmatism would have engendered.

But though the practical good sense of these men served to retard the growth of these evils, it has been unable to extinguish the sectarianism of the system, which has at length driven, as it were, the non-conformist bodies to set up schools for themselves ; and, in doing so, they have unfortunately followed the steps of the old reformers most closely in the most questionable points of their policy, by planting opposition seminaries under the patronage

* Rev. W. Muir's evidence, p. 94.

of the Government, to the perpetuation of mutual antipathies, and to the scandal of the Scottish name.

The increased proportion of separate, as distinguished from mixed, education has rapidly increased, but there appear to be no data for arriving at accurate conclusions on this head.

From certain parliamentary returns presented in 1838, it seems that, in the previous year, one-third of the school-going population attended the parish schools, whilst, in the opinion of the author of an excellent pamphlet published last year, it may be shown that the number now in attendance does not exceed one-sixth ; and when the Government sectarian system comes into full operation, the utility of the old schools will be still further impaired ; not by the superior merits of the new ones, but by the fact that parents are expected by their spiritual leaders to discountenance the Erastian* schools of the Establishment.

In the Lowlands it must be said, to the credit of the independence of the people, that they are slow to believe in the necessity of withdrawing their

* This is a cant term used by Scotch ministers. When they desire to cast discredit upon a member of the Establishment, he is pointed out as an "Erastian" to the people, with little desire to explain to them what were the opinions of Erasmus.

It appears to convey the same conventional signification as the word "Moderate" in religious politics, which was also a term of reproach. Thus also in ancient times a man was deemed infamous and condemned to perpetual exile who espoused neither party.

children from schools with which they have no fault to find, on such a flimsy and transparent pretext ; but in parts of the Highlands, where the people are more easily led, the secession of the children from the schools has been as complete as the secession of their parents from the churches of the Establishment. Thus in one county we find the Government plan complained of as one which “ will perpetuate strife, hatred, and all manner of evil feeling among the young of the community ;” inasmuch as in every parish “ school is opposed to school, teacher to teacher, and vast districts without any school at all ;—railing, defaming, proselytizing ;—a rising generation trained to hate their neighbours if they walk not with them ; and this Government plan will add fuel to the unholy flame.”

Captain Russell Elliott,* Inspector-General of the Board for the Relief of Highland Destitution, in his last report upon the state of Sutherland Proper, speaks feelingly on the same subject, and deplores the lowering tendency of these religious feuds upon the educational interests of the people, as a serious obstacle to their material prosperity.

To those who believe with him that success in life is frequently attributable to the “ competent teachers of the village school,” “ the necessity of putting aside that party spirit that would advocate attendance on an inferior teacher, when a better is within reach,” must indeed appear most urgent.

* Vide Appendix.

It is surely intolerable that any encouragement should be given to a system producing evils such as these—evils which might be bearable and even welcome were they the necessary symptoms of emancipation from the thraldom of a pliant and unthinking uniformity of opinion, but which are provoking when it is considered that they spring from no difference of religious belief, properly so called. They exist, on the contrary, in greatest force where the people seceding from the Church by no means dissent from her tenets.

The Catholics and Episcopalians entertain no very strong objections to the parish schools which congregations, identical in doctrinal belief with the Establishment, condemn as Erastian and intolerable—from whence it may be inferred that the religious instruction afforded at the parish schools has not the most remote connexion with the dissatisfaction of dissenters.

In proof of this we may refer to a circular which, under authority of a Committee of the House of Commons, was sent to every parish school in Scotland about twelve years ago. It contained, amongst many others, the following query :—“ Do children attend the school without reference to the religious persuasion of their parents ? ” Out of 924 that returned any answer at all, 915 replied in the affirmative.*

* Of non-parochial schools, 2285 out of 2329 replied to the same question in the affirmative.

But, in some cases, certain remarks were appended to the unqualified "yes," serving still more clearly to show that the absence of sectarian teaching in these schools was a reality, and that the genius of the people, when left to themselves, is entirely opposed to the introduction amongst their children of any such topics as should prevent any portion of their fellow-countrymen from taking advantage of a course of united instruction.

The following are, we believe, almost the only instances in which qualifications of the usual affirmative reply were made. They are taken in the order in which they appear in the parliamentary Blue Book.

"They occasionally did so till lately; almost all the Episcopal persuasion now attend another school." "They occasionally do." "No Dissenters connected with my school." "Dissenters generally prefer a private teacher, if a Dissenter, but they teach the same Catechism that we do." "Dissenters are more partial to other schools." "No distinction made, and all denominations attend." "Dissenting parents, especially of late, are disposed to have their children with a teacher of their own persuasion." "The inhabitants of the parish are all Protestant Presbyterians. I never heard any objections to send their children to the parish school on account of the religious persuasion of the teacher." "There is no distinction. The Dissenters are very few; not one

in one hundred. The Standards and the Catechism are the same as in the Church." "No; Dissenters almost invariably cling to teachers of their own appointment or connexion, or who are dependent upon them." "There is a subscription school, which has generally come to be attended chiefly by Dissenters, of whom, however, a few attend the parish school." "Invariably they do." "All the Dissenters in the village send their children to the parish school." "Yes; but no children of Roman Catholics attend." "Three years ago, the Voluntaries set up a school of their own, which is attended by the children of Dissenters; but some of them still adhere to the parochial school." "Since the late noise about Voluntary schools and churches, Dissenters have withdrawn their children from entering the parochial schools, and in every direction of the parish have set up illiterate teachers of their own, males and females, and offer to instruct the children of the Establishment gratis." "They do; any reference of the kind is totally unknown." The following are the only answers which allude to the Roman Catholics. "They do; and although the children of Catholics are seldom to be found there, it is believed to arise from other causes than religion." "They do freely, and especially the Roman Catholics, of whom there is one family at present, have been accustomed to send their children without scruple." "Papists and Episco-

pilians made no difference when there were any in the parish. At present we have no Dissenters." "Yes; Protestants of many denominations, and even Roman Catholics." "They do; Roman Catholic and Protestant children are taught in the same classes without any objection by their parents." "Yes; the children of Churchmen, as well as Dissenters of different denominations; one child belongs to a Roman Catholic." "Yes; even Roman Catholics." "No; a Roman Catholic school has lately been established under the superintendence of the Catholic clergy of Glasgow, to which the parents of the Roman Catholic persuasion for the most part send their children." "No children attend but the children of Protestants." "They attend except one family or two, who are of the Roman Catholic persuasion."

These exceptions will probably not be thought to weaken the argument—that there exists amongst the people no inherent desire for disunited education. The benefits and power of practical liberality in allaying jealousies, even in spite of the irritating influence of a partial system, may be illustrated also from the evidence of the Rev. N. Macleod. That gentleman having said that the directors of an educational institution, to which he belongs at Glasgow, adhere, some of them to the Established Church, others to the Episcopalian body, others to the Old Dissenters, and one to the Free Church, amongst whom not the slightest appearance of jea-

lousy had exhibited itself, is asked by the Committee whether there are not a considerable number of Roman Catholic Highlanders in Glasgow ? He says, “ Not many ; the Roman Catholics are chiefly Irish. There are a few ; but I should say that in those General Assembly schools in the Highlands,—in Barrow, for instance, where they are almost all Papists,—the Roman Catholic children attend.

“ When Principal Baird and I went to that Island, we carried letters of introduction from the Roman Catholic bishop of Lismore to his priest there, who gave us every assistance possible in establishing the schools, and exerting a very salutary influence on the parents of the children. In many other districts the Catholic children attend our schools without any reluctance ; only there is no attempt to proselytize them ; they do not learn the Catechism of our Church ; all that, the Roman Catholic priest is allowed to manage his own way, but they receive all the other branches of education, and even read the Scriptures in the classes without the slightest hesitation.”

Again, No. 979. “ The superintendence of presbyteries and their annual examination of schools which has been systematically followed since the Church of Scotland was founded, has had the very happiest effects, and the most salutary influence on the education of the people of Scotland. The superintendence has never been complained of by the

old Dissenters, nor by the Popish priests, nor is it alleged to have been at any period abused," &c.

Mr John Gibson, Government Inspector, also states, (No. 116) "that Roman Catholic children have been wont to attend the schools of the Church of Scotland in the Highlands and Islands. This they seem to have done in consequence of the manner in which these schools have been conducted in reference to the Roman Catholic population," &c. The authority upon which this course with regard to the Roman Catholics is taken, is that of the Education Committee of the General Assembly ; and he quotes the following extract from one of their reports, dated 1829. The report says, "It only remains to notice that a considerable portion of those attending at the several schools are of the Roman Catholic Church ; and it is proper to state that the schools are always open to scholars of this class, as freely and on the same terms as to the Protestants, and that the teachers have been directed not to press on the Roman Catholic children any instruction to which their parents or their priest may object, as interfering with the principles of their own religion. The Roman Catholics resort accordingly to the General Assembly schools in most cases without jealousy or reluctance, and receive every branch of literary instruction in the same classes with the Protestants, from the same school-books, and without any sort of distinction betwixt the two denominations.

At the same time the Committee have specially directed, that the religious instruction given at the Assembly schools, whatever may be the number of Catholics usually in attendance, shall be accommodated strictly and exclusively to the principles of the Established Church, and the Catholic children are invited to participate so far as their advisers may think proper to direct them." It is to be presumed that the practical experience and good feeling of the teachers themselves must have led them to carry out to the full those wise injunctions of forbearance laid down by the Committee of the General Assembly; and it is certain, that if this ill-appreciated body of men were permitted a greater degree of discretion in making amongst themselves the best arrangements possible under different circumstances, less would be heard of those wretched difficulties of which so much has been made.

Thus stands the case at this moment, that the sects most widely distinct from the Establishment countenance her schools, whilst a systematic attack against them is organized by those who are at present identical with her in religious persuasion. On this head the Committee of the House of Lords, who were apparently at a loss to understand the specific objections entertained by the Dissenters to the parish schools, asked whether they did not desire their reform "less on account of the education of the children than to open a field of employment for persons who wish to be schoolmasters, who are

members of congregations not belonging to the Established Church?" The Rev. Dr Taylor (minister of the Secession Church) answered,* "Quite so. It is but justice to the present teachers to say that, as far as my knowledge goes, they do not generally attempt to proselytize or interfere with the religious opinions of the children." "So that, as far as the children are concerned, there is no injury done?" "As a general rule I believe not." He afterwards says, that Dissenters consider it a grievance, a badge of inferiority, and an act of injustice, that they should be excluded from holding office in schools which are national institutions; and in corroboration of this he goes on to say, that when the question was under discussion in the Synod of his (the Secession) Church, whether or not schools should be established in connexion with that Church, one reason which weighed strongly with that body in inducing them to adopt the scheme, was that the teachers of the parochial schools were exclusively chosen from members of the Established Church; and he stated it as his own opinion, that if the present system be continued, Free Church schools would inevitably be established, which "would be a great evil, because all the schools in the country would in that case be sectarian."

Since then it appears that, even under the pre-

* House of Lords' Committee, p. 101.

sent offensive system, Roman Catholics, Episcopilians, and Presbyterians have received the advantages of combined education ; surely the principles which have proved successful in this country in allaying the jealousies of persons professing different creeds, will not now be abandoned by Protestants in their dealings with each other.

It is apparent that it is not the religious instruction so much as the tests upon conscience, and the legislative disabilities, which are in fault in the present system. Abolish all trace of these, and the very people who now thwart will be disposed to encourage statesmen in their efforts to ameliorate and extend popular education throughout the country.

Let the State apply to all sects the principles applied by the General Assembly to the Roman Catholics, whose priests, in the words of the Rev. Mr Macleod, are allowed to manage their religious instructions in their own way. Let these principles be fully acted upon, and the necessary result will be, that any dogmatical instruction in which all cannot freely participate would be forbidden in the schools—at least it would form no portion of the regular school business.

All that the clergy would be “ allowed to manage in their own way.”*

It has been said with truth that the “ flagrant

* Evidence, p. 123.

inconsistency of all Protestant intolerance is a poison in its veins which must destroy itself ;" and in effect it is the constitutional intolerance of the parochial system that has brought the schools into their present ridiculous state of antagonism with the people —an antagonism whose pernicious effects cannot be neutralized by the erection of rival schools in direct antagonism with another section of the people, but only by a fearless application of the true antidote of tolerance to all our national institutions.

All the eminent persons who have taken a lead in the cause of popular education have had occasion to deplore the difficulties with which the question is surrounded by the jealousies of religious bodies. Nowhere are these animosities more vehement, and I had almost said more unmeaning, than in Scotland. Yet it may be conceded that at the present moment all sects have some cause for dissatisfaction —the Dissenters on account of the disqualifications to which they are subject, and the Church on account of the apparent preference given by Government to the new over the old schools.

It is not to the purpose to examine the influence which this or that line of policy may be expected to exercise over the exclusive interests of the Church, although it is probable she would, in the long run, suffer less by a gracious surrender of antiquated privileges, than by an unwise attempt to preserve an authority ill suited to the temper of the people, and to the circumstances of the times.

Her avowed enemies are numerous, and many of her best friends have little respect for privileges which, ceasing to be of national utility, become as indefensible as are the unduly exercised prerogatives of sovereigns, or privileges of parliament. Under these circumstances it is not perhaps altogether vain to hope she will understand that prudence, not less than justice, requires her to relinquish that which must otherwise be wrenched from her grasp. The following excellent remarks, written by a minister of the Established Church, are among the most hopeful symptoms of the desire, of some portion at least, of the Established clergy to take a comprehensive view of the Scotch educational question.

“I wish Government could be advised to take a different course—to give us a national system conceived in a bold spirit, *fiat justitia ruat cœlum*—and depend upon it, though a dreadful clatter would ensue for a little, it would soon cease, and all would go well. I do also wish very strongly that the friends of the Church would take a different view of the matter. They may be quite right in holding that the Church should be omnipotent in this matter, and that no public grants should be given to any schools that did not submit to her jurisdiction; but all this won’t do at the present day, and therefore, instead of spending my strength in ranting for this, till bit by bit my whole power is secretly worn away, I should be disposed at once honestly to confess that

I could not get what I wanted—what I thought best—and then try with all my might to secure the next best, and to settle the matter for a time at least. It seems clear to me that a good national system of education is a thing at present utterly impossible in Scotland, if the existing parochial system be maintained in exclusive connexion with the Established Church ; and therefore, conceiving that a national system is very desirable, I should at once, were I the Church, consent to give up the connexion. I do not think she would in the end suffer by such a step. I think she deserves all credit for the manner in which, more especially of late years, she has exercised her superintendence of schools, and sought the advancement of the cause of education, rather for the good of the country at large than for her own selfish and sectarian aggrandisement ; but really, after all, I do not think she has any cause to complain, though deprived of this superintendence ; and I believe that, if its loss should prove injurious to her interests, this will be owing rather to the false estimate she herself has formed of its value, than to any real substantial power which its exercise confers upon her. At all events, I most decidedly think that in the long run she would suffer much less by agreeing at once to surrender her rights in favour of a large liberal scheme, than she will do if she succeed in obstructing such a scheme, and in reducing Government to the necessity of proceeding on the principle of the

Council Minutes. The necessary and permanent effects of this plan would be to foster sectarianism, and create as intense a rivalry and opposition in educational matters as are now the peculiar disgrace of religious affairs."

The resolutions adopted by a committee of that important body, the United Presbyterian Synod, are not less enlightened and significant. They resolved on the 28th of last June :—

"I. That the acknowledged inefficiency of the parochial schools of Scotland, and the dissatisfaction with regard to them which generally exists, are mainly attributable to the subjection of these schools to the control of the Established Church ; while there is thus combined the *inconsistency* of a system called national being placed in the hands of a minority, with the *injustice* of maintaining the interests of a party at the public expense.

"II. That the remedy for these evils is not to be found in educational grants to different religious denominations — a scheme whereby the interests both of religion and education are liable to suffer from the spirit of party ; that such a result is much to be deprecated, at a period of life when it is a main object of all sound moral training to foster kindly and generous sentiments ; and that, where this scheme has been put to the test of experiment, it is already yielding the bitter fruits of alienation and animosity which might have been anticipated.

"III. That to render the parochial system of

education truly a national one, the following conditions appear indispensable :—

“ 1. The control of the Established Church over the parochial schools entirely to cease, and the right of superintendence and of management not to be placed in the hands of religious denominations as such.

“ 2. Attendance at a normal school and certified acquaintance with the art and practice of teaching, to be required of all candidates for the situation of teachers.

“ 3. Security for the sound principles of teachers to be sought in a right mode of appointment ; and religious tests to be abolished, as sectarian in spirit, and, at the same time, nugatory as evidence of character.

“ 4. Heads of families in parishes, or in such districts as may be found convenient, to have the right of electing the teacher, and of superintending, by a committee of their number or otherwise, the business of the schools.

“ 5. The funds at present set apart for the support of parochial schools, to continue to be applied to this purpose, and such additions as may be found necessary in particular districts to be raised by local taxation.—With a view to place the system under the wholesome control of public opinion,

“ 6. Stated returns from the national schools, embracing the branches taught, fees, attendance, &c., to be made to the Privy Council or to a Na-

tional Board of Education, and a full digest of such returns to be published annually."

I will remark, in conclusion, that if I have been in the slightest degree successful in calling attention to this subject, and in showing,—first, that it has been the custom in Scotland to conduct the educational concerns of the nation on more liberal principles than the constitution of the establishment would appear to warrant, and that the result of this practical liberality has been that the children of all denominations have taken advantage of schools and universities where the dangers of dogmatical instruction and of proselytism did not exist; secondly, that the Government plan, if it does not actually suggest, necessarily encourages the introduction of the new practice of disunited education ; and, thirdly, that the principle of local taxation is one of old standing in Scotland, and has probably never been objected to for the support of education ;—if, I repeat, I have been successful in establishing these points, and if it be undesirable that Scotland, whose educational institutions have been her boast, should now descend to the level of the sister country, for whose peculiarly discreditable position the present scheme was framed ; it follows that the whole subject should be urged upon the consideration of the Government, with a view to the adoption of measures consistent with justice and reason, and with the right of the public

at large to exercise control over their own institutions—measures widely distinct from a system which is unworthy the policy of a great nation, since it proposes to attain its ends by pitting one sect against another, and by stimulating their benevolence through their mutual antipathies.

A P P E N D I X.

APPENDIX TO PAGE 23.

The Formula to be signed by schoolmasters runs thus :—

“ I, _____ do hereby declare that I do sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, approven by the General Assemblies of this National Church, and ratified by law in the year 1690, and frequently confirmed by divers acts of parliament since that time, to be truths of God ; and I do own the same as the confession of my faith ; as, likewise, I do own the purity of worship presently authorised and practised in this Church, and also the Presbyterian government and discipline, now so happily established therein ; which doctrine, worship, and Church government, I am persuaded, are founded on the Word of God, and agreeable thereto ; and I promise that, through the grace of God, I shall firmly and constantly adhere to the same ; and, to the utmost of my power, shall in my station assert, maintain, and defend the said doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Church by kirk-sessions, presbyteries, provincial synods, and general assemblies ; and that I shall, in my practice, conform myself to the said worship, and submit to the said discipline and government, and never endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion of the same ; and I promise that I shall follow no divisive course from the present establishment in this Church, renouncing all doctrines, tenets, and opinions whatsoever, contrary to, or inconsistent with, the said doctrine, worship, discipline, or government of this Church.”

APPENDIX TO PAGE 26.

From the Third Report of the Edinburgh Section of the Board for the Relief of Highland Destitution.

Captain Russell Elliott's Report to the Board on the state of Sutherland Proper, page 76, states—

“ There are abundance of schools ; there is access to all who will take advantage of them. There are schoolmasters in every variety of acquirement, from the best down to very near the limit of what might be considered the most unfitted for the teaching of youth. There is a respectable, indeed general attendance ; but there is also this solemn fact standing out in discreditable relief, that there *are* youth of both sexes growing up in ignorance of education and of religion, that my personal knowledge of the islands in the South Sea can testify has scarce a parallel in many of them. One neglected girl, of the age of fourteen, who spoke English perfectly, proved by her answers an entire ignorance of anything more than that there was a God, but had no knowledge of Christianity.

“ This applies chiefly but not exclusively to the fisher population, although the above instance was not from that class. In one village, I extract from my notes the exact words of a pious senior, who says, ‘ Out of twenty-five fisher families, five or six years ago, there could only be found a Bible in seven houses ; now there are few exceptions. It is the effect of the children going to school, and the reverse (no Bibles) the effect of their not going. It was not poverty, it was deadness—laziness. The Rev. _____, Free Church minister, generously offered education without fees, which, with his Sunday school, has had a great effect.’ ”

Page 78.—“ But there is an improvement that cannot be too soon attended to, and will much prepare the way for ulterior considerations ; and it is involved in the double fact that the lots, as at present cultivated, are not yielding one-half what they are capable of producing, and that the people are desirous to be instructed in a better system, which, it is not too much

to say, with the same labour and more skill, would produce double returns. To do this there are two suggestions that occur to me. One for the instruction of the youth, and prospective—the other for the guidance of the adults, and immediate in its results. To speak of the first, I must advert to the subject of education generally ; and I cannot doubt that the present liberal assistance the Duke of Sutherland gives to some schools would, on the general principle of his undoubted wish to do good, and advance the interests of education, be extended in books, maps, and prizes to all—if it were shown that there were no sectarian bias operating in favour of a worse master for a better—if there was an admitted principle of free-trade in schools."

Page 80.—“ There is an ample fallow field for the full scope of the latent energies of the Highlander, both on land and sea. Indolence is consequent upon contentment with the lowest state of existence. This is partially changed here—a spirit of inquiry and desire to advance is upon them. This is particularly observable in the superior success of those seeking their fortunes from home, who had had the good, but (at that time in Sutherland) rare luck, to attend the schools of competent teachers—in the one case the best disposed attaining no higher result than stationary mediocrity—in the other stepping out of their class, appropriating the peculiar characteristics that have long marked the shrewd, moral, and trusted Scotsman in all parts of the world. I can point to various cases where these people have succeeded beyond reasonable expectation, rising from ordinary railway labourers to the contractors for large jobs in the southern counties of England ; and I had great pleasure in hearing from the young wife of one who has been for some years in France, while she lives and manages the lot at home, that her husband and his brother have a remunerative railway contract in France that the late disturbances in the country have not interrupted.

“ It is not to be supposed that men such as these will be content with matters as they were on their return ; and I em-

phatically repeat, that as this success is mainly and clearly attributable to the competent teachers of the village school, it speaks in a more authoritative tone than I can use of the necessity of putting aside that party spirit that would advocate attendance on an inferior teacher when a better is within reach, or that indifference which is satisfied with a school-house and a master, without testing his qualifications and dispositions for the most important office in social life. Those interested in the subject will feel gratitude to the proprietor for the great efforts he has made in this direction—his best sympathies are engaged in it; but while I believe he would desire to extend all encouragement to education for its own sake, his hands are cramped by the bitterness of party spirit that does so much harm."

THE END.

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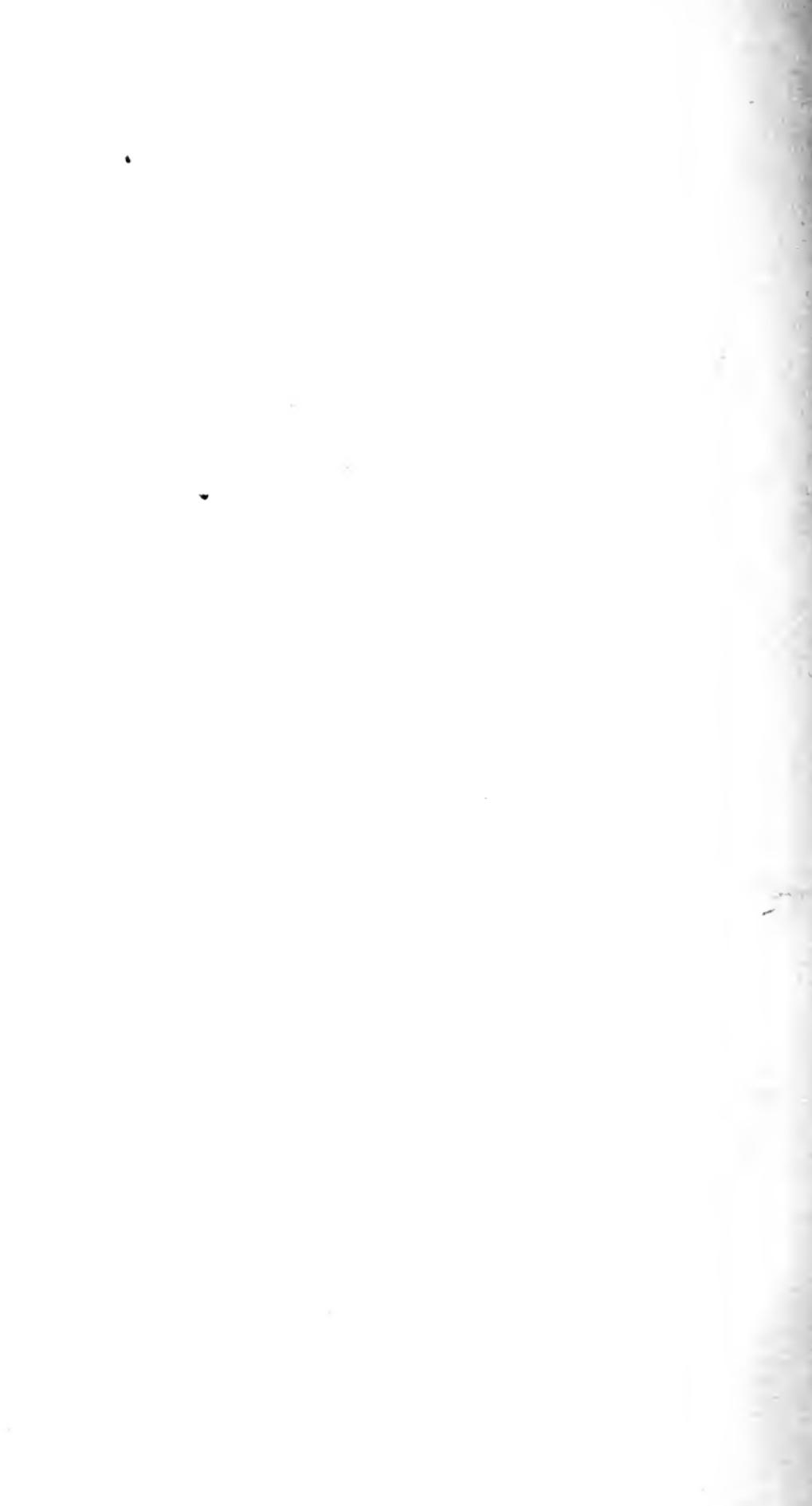
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